

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 880-2-883-7150-4

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



REMARKS

by

U.S. AMBASSADOR DAN MOZENA

Social Business Day Welcoming Remarks

Radisson Hotel, Dhaka

DHAKA, JUNE 28 -- U.S. Ambassador Dan Mozena delivered the following remarks at the Social Business Day on Friday, June 28.

(Begin text)

Professor Muhammad Yunus, great humanitarian, believer in the poor, and Birthday Boy

His Highness Tunku Ali Redhauddin (Tungkoo Ali Rayhowdin) from Malaysia

Good friend Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Shiro Sadoshima

So many other dignitaries that I can't even begin to recognize them

... most importantly, all of you ... you who share Professor Yunus's deep belief in people, especially his belief in poor people, his belief that the poor have the skills and determination to lift themselves and their families out of poverty

Asalaam 'malaikum and good morning.

The vast, circular chamber throbbed with excitement.

Stoic witness to the greatest moments of American history, the grand space on this day abandoned all decorum. The larger than life portrayals of America's heroes who live in the vast murals that encircle the chamber woke from their ancient slumber as they, too, wanted to witness the great moment of history that was unfolding beneath them. Even George Washington, who is ensconced on an eternal throne more than fifty meters overhead, could not miss the occasion, as he smiled down on the glorious scene below.

The chamber truly pulsed with excitement, with a sense of grand history in the making.

And then the beautiful lady stepped forth ...

With a single sweep of her hand, she commanded the great chamber, the frescoes, the statues, the paintings, the acres of splendiferous marble to join her singing tribute to her father ... and this mighty chorus beautifully echoed the daughter's words portraying her father as a beautiful dreamer.

I am told that even George Washington from his perch far overhead shed a tear as he considered how a simple song could so exquisitely capture the essence of a great man, Muhammad Yunus.

Indeed, Yunus is a great dreamer ... he dreamed that poor people have value, that poor people want better lives for themselves and their families, that poor people have skills, that poor people can invest money, that poor people can do business, that poor people can thrive, that poor people can lift themselves out of poverty, that poor people can become fully contributing members of society.

Many of us remember well these dreams were once considered radical and they were mocked; conventional wisdom of the time knew that poor people had no skills, that poor people would not invest money, that they would simply eat it, but Professor Yunus stuck with his dreams and launched a grand scheme to bring micro-credit to millions of the nation's poorest, mostly women. I have visited scores of these Grameen villages throughout Bangladesh and have seen for myself how these micro loans have enabled the nation's most vulnerable to build new lives for themselves and their families. I have visited their enterprises, been a guest in their pukka homes, chatted with their children who are now going to school, witnessed firsthand the respect that these women now command in their families and communities ... I have seen the mighty power of hope ... and it is a beautiful sight.

I witnessed this same phenomenon in America earlier this year when I visited a Grameen project in San Francisco. I felt like I was in a Bangladeshi village, as the women members shared with me their stories of how they used micro loans to turn their lives around, to build better futures for themselves and their children. I have seen the mighty power of hope ... and it is a beautiful sight in America, too.

But not satisfied with these triumphs, Yunus took his dreams to a new level, launching a new concept of social business, a beautiful and simple idea that private companies can be established to address targeted social causes and their profits reinvested to ensure their sustainability and to expand their impact in helping the poor. Again, conventional wisdom mocked Yunus's ideas; again skeptics were wrong as many of these businesses are now thriving as they generate modest profits to promote the social well-being of the poor.

History was indeed made on April 17 in the Great Rotunda of America's Capitol, when the Congress of the United States of America awarded its highest possible award, the Congressional Gold Medal, to honor Professor Muhammad Yunus, the dreamer, the dreamer who made his dreams reality, bringing hope to millions here in Bangladesh, in America and around the world.

Yunus, the dreamer; Yunus, the believer in the poor; Yunus, the builder of new lives and hope; Yunus, whose lifetime goal is to put poverty in a museum; Yunus is one of only seven

individuals in the history of the world who has received the Nobel Peace Prize, the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the United States Congressional Gold Medal.

I can think of no one more worthy ... and on behalf of the millions of poor people who now live with hope, I thank him deeply for his service to the world.

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